

Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

Scope & Purpose

This form is to be used by the external Water Environment Governance Group (WEGG), to review, validate and formally approve the length of bluespaces improved for the Water Environment Improvements ODI. The form will be completed by the Water Environment Team with support from project partners and presented to the WEGG. After formal approval, the km of water environment improved will be recorded against the ODI and projects will be marked as completed on the Water Environment Scorecard and illustrated as delivered in the Bluespaces Mapping Portals.

Project Name

Holywell Water Environment Improvements

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Friends of Holywell Dene	Peter Ellis	Working Party Coordinator

Water Environment Improved (NWG use only)

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
Year 3	4.3km	4.3km	N/A

Water Environment Assurance

This project has been reviewed internally to ensure it has delivered benefits above and beyond our baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. Following our assurance process, the project was approved by both our internal and external groups for review before delivery. This form presents evidence of project completion and the outputs achieved, to request project sign off.

Level	Project Acceptance Date	Project Approval Date	Completed Project Sign Off Date
Project Team	March 2022	NA	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	March 2022	March 2022	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	March 2022	March 2022	May 2023

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
January 2022	January 2022	November 2022

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

Through this Bluespaces project, Holywell Dene has been made more accessible to for the local community and other visitors, and habitat improvements have been undertaken. Support provided through this project has enabled the local Friends of Holywell Dene (FoHD) volunteer group to undertake improvements, and ensures they have the resources they need to continue to deliver access and habitat management across the site into the future.

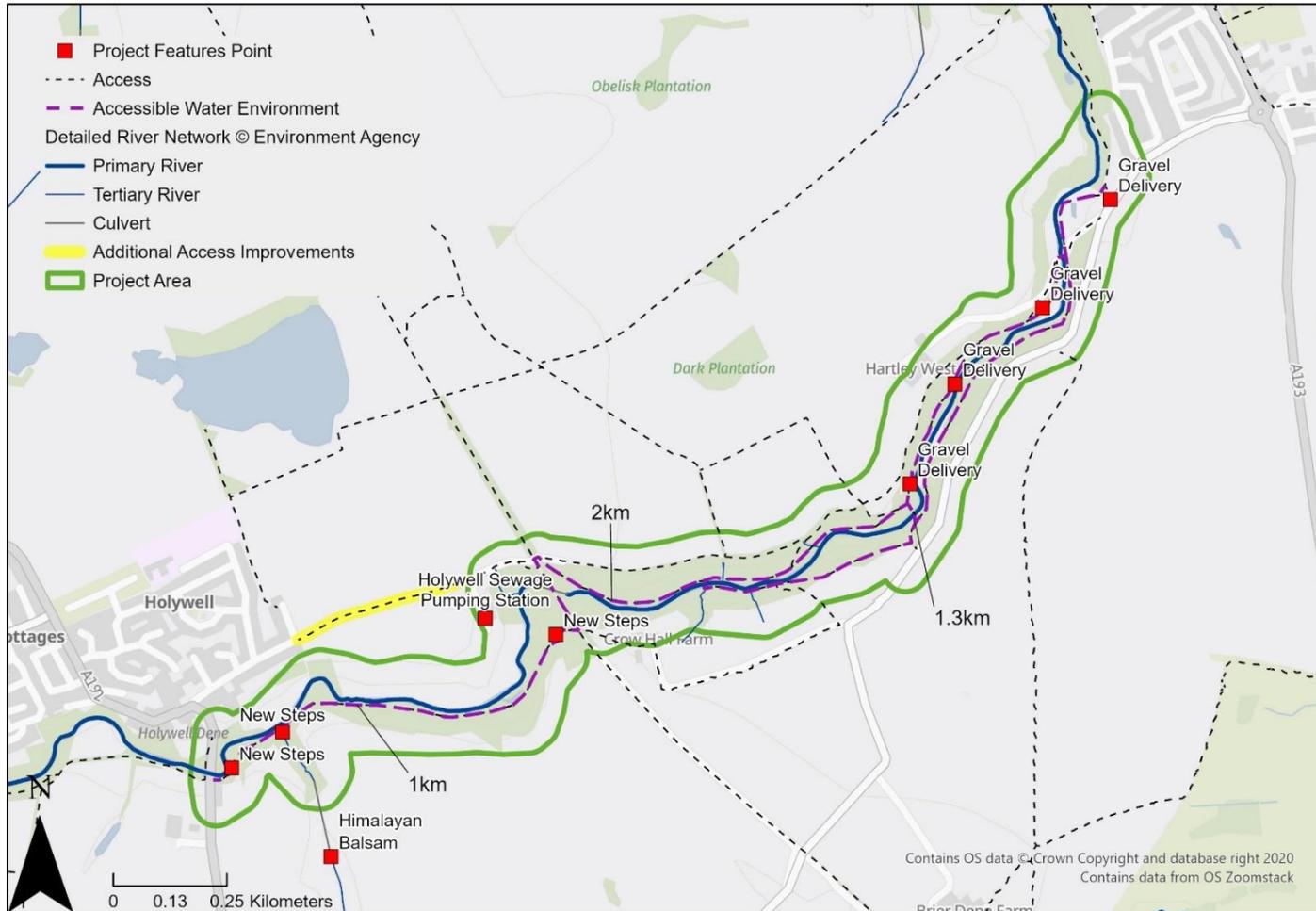
Highlights

- Gravel path resurfacing, new fencing, and step building has been undertaken to enhance, retain, and maintain safe access for the public across the project area
- Three sets of steps have been constructed on steep and muddy sections of the Dene to improve access for site users. The steps have been welcomed on the FoHD public Facebook page. Lots of “likes” and some comments.
- Control of Himalayan Balsam has been undertaken throughout the site and in upstream source areas
- Tree removal and vegetation management has been undertaken, facilitated by the purchase of a chainsaw for the FoHD group. This, and training of an additional operator for this, will support continued woodland maintenance and clearing of fallen trees from footpaths and the burn
- A new parking area has been created at Holywell Pumping Station by NWG to support volunteer work party access to the dene when it is required



Maps

Holywell Water Environment Improvements



Total Length of Bluespaces: 4.3km

Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Holywell Dene

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Footpath surface improvements and fencing in Holywell Dene to reduce riverside path erosion and visitor impacts; gravel deliveries will occur at a number of locations within the Dene for spreading 2. The creation of steps on three steep and heavily worn slopes to improve safer access for visitors during wet and icy weather (handrails and post supports will also be added if necessary) 3. Health and wellbeing benefits through delivery of improvements by volunteers working outdoors and engaging with nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through:
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of 40 tonnes of gravel has allowed the improvement and maintenance of bridleways, footpaths and access points within the Dene. Paths have been widened through removal of encroaching grass and surfaces are now less slippery and more durable due to application of gravel. Fencing has secured dangerous areas and protected banksides against erosion from footfall. Further gravel application and access improvements will also be delivered into the future. 2. Three sets of steps have been created on steep and muddy sections of the Dene. Steps have been welcomed on the FoHD public Facebook page. Lots of “likes” and some comments. 3. Morale has been very high within the FOHD group during the work as the benefits have been immediate, and passers-by have been very forthcoming with their compliments and appreciation. Weekly reports available on the FOHD website give an insight into how much the volunteers appreciate working in the natural environment. During the project weekly tasks have had an average number of 10 volunteers, delivering over 1,700 hours of in kind effort to the project in total. 4. The creation of a wooden seat near the top of one flight of steps is additional to the project and has been appreciated by visitors 	
Evidence	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>	
<p>Stone delivery for dene footpath, stone piles along the Dene footpath</p>	



Near the biking area at the tunnel beneath the dismantled railway line



On a steep slope near the burn downstream of Holywell road bridge



Sets of steps installed on three steep and heavily worn slopes across the dene



FOHD volunteers hard at work building steps

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access improvements will keep walkers and cyclists to the designated path to protect the riverside flora and fauna by reducing disturbance. Areas currently affected by users straying onto the riverside grass areas will recover as footfall decreases in these areas 2. Continued woodland conservation management to support habitats will be enabled in Holywell Dene by the purchase of a chainsaw for the FOHD and provision of training, allowing thinning of non-native sycamore and beech, creation of deadwood habitat in safe areas, and enhancement of the bird feeding areas throughout the Dene 3. Control of Himalyan Balsam will take place throughout Holywell Dene and upstream at identified source sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats ➤ B3: Reduces risk or impact of invasive non-native species (INNS)

Outputs

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access improvements have been delivered and this outcome has been very successful, with walkers and the majority of cyclists observed by FOHD using the more clearly defined routes, protecting habitat 2. The provision of an additional chainsaw and training for a volunteer has helped the group remove and manage vegetation, and deal more rapidly with tasks such as tree cutting and removal, maintaining safe walkways, clearing blockages and providing homes for wildlife. 3. The pre-emptive removal of Himalayan Balsam across the site has already reaped benefits, with fewer plants seen downstream this in 2022-23. Balsam pulling days were held at Seghill upstream plus 4 to 5 smaller days across the site. This work will continue to help manage this invasive species.

Evidence



Qualified chainsaw operator putting new skills and equipment to use



Searching for Balsam, tackling Himalyan Balsam upstream

Water Quality

Expected Project Outcomes

1. Reduction in erosion on site by keeping visitors on designated paths should help reduce sediment into the burn
2. Path improvements should keep users away from the watercourse and reduce instream littering

Benefits

- C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour

Outputs

1. Fencing has secured high risk erosion areas and protected banksides against erosion from footfall, and with the path improvements walkers and the majority of cyclists observed by FOHD are using the more clearly defined routes. Steps created on steep muddy banks will also help reduce erosion and sediment transfer into the burn
2. There has been a very noticeable reduction in litter around the sites of the new steps and on the approaches to the Dene, and members of FOHD have been active at removing litter during volunteer events including wader stream cleans and clearing river debris

Evidence



Removing logjam and instream litter

Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduced local flooding of the site through removal of in-river obstructions 2. The purchase of a new FOHD vehicle will enable these improvements to be delivered and the group to deliver further access and habitat management improvements* 3. Vicinity to residential areas and tourist attractions such as Seaton Delaval Hall and Seaton Sluice Beach make this area a prime spot for public visitor enjoyment 4. Project activity benefits the community through engagement activities such as coffee mornings and guided walks, promoting a sense of stewardship of the Local Nature Reserve and raising environmental awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D1: Provides resilience and adaptation to climate change and/or reduces the risk of flooding ➤ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG

Outputs

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The provision of an additional chainsaw and training for a volunteer has helped the group deal more easily and rapidly with tree cutting and the removal and clearing of blockages from the stream 2. A vehicle has been purchased for transportation of equipment and materials to maintain Holywell Dene with funding from EDF Energy and Northumberland Council 3. The popularity of Holywell Dene increased during and after lockdowns due to Covid. Individuals, organisations such as Scouts and walking groups are now visiting more than before, with the public enjoying the beauty, flora, fauna and variety of experiences they can enjoy in such an accessible location. 4. FoHD is currently working with the Environmental Records Information Centre to create a project to record flora and fauna within a defined area either by individuals or guided groups. FOHD attended St Mary’s wildlife festival in August 2022 and have hosted community coffee mornings in Seaton Sluice and Holywell, and are also organising a “Bat and Moth Evening” in summer 2023 with support from the Northumberland Bat Group and Northumberland Wildlife Trust.
--

Evidence



Removal of in-river obstructions and newly purchased vehicle with tools



New bench installed overlooking the Seaton Burn, and new parking area created by NWG at Holywell Pumping Station as part of the capital project legacy to support FOHD volunteer work party access to the dene



Newsletter – Autumn 2022

www.holywelldene.org.uk

Welcome to our 2022 Autumn Newsletter!

What a glorious summer! Little rain and intense heat led Holywell Dene to be much drier than usual. Burn levels were low, but choral competition remained high, with the Blackcaps clear winners in my view and although low in numbers, strong in vocals, the Robins became my particular favourites, some daring to eat from your hand.

But now the birdsong has quietened, the vibrant summer hues are giving way to warm autumn golds and reds, and our summer visitors prepare to leave us for warmer climes.

Congratulations to the Working Party on carrying out their tasks in unprecedented stifling heat, wearing overalls and protective equipment.

The creation of 3 sets of steps for the Holywell Water Project continues (sponsored by Northumbrian Water), with the final set to be completed this autumn.

Thank you to the Himalayan Balsam bashing volunteers, to the squirrel monitors and bird feeders.

We are very grateful for all gifts and donations and to you our members, whose fees facilitate the preservation of Holywell Dene.

Additional thanks to those who have helped raise over £150 through shopping via Easy Fundraising.

It was lovely to meet and chat informally with members at our AGM. It was sad however to see the retirement of 2 of our longest serving committee members Russell and Bryan. They continue to support us in other ways, but their wisdom and repartee in meetings will be sorely missed.

FOHD had a presence at the Seaton Sluice Jubilee



Membership

We currently have 136 individuals and families which sadly is a little less than last year.

It's time for you to renew your membership for 2023. We are pleased that at our AGM we agreed that the annual subscription should remain unchanged at £5 for a family and £3 for individual membership. We know times are hard right now but we hope you will continue to be members and also ask you to encourage your friends and neighbours to join and support us.

Your vital membership subscriptions help pay for the cost of bird food, insurance and transport for our working party, as well as tools and materials which enable them to continue their invaluable work.

Forthcoming Events

Our ever popular coffee morning is being held at 10.30-12.30 on Saturday 22 October at Seaton Sluice Community Centre. We would love you to join us for a cuppa, cake and a natter. There will also be a raffle and our 2023 FOHD calendars will be on sale.

The 2023 FOHD calendar can also be ordered via your membership renewal form. It costs £5 (plus £1 if delivered). We hope you agree we've chosen some lovely photos from those submitted by our members.



Improved access throughout Holywell Dene

Congratulations to the Holywell Dene Working Party who, as well as their routine clearance and maintenance tasks have been installing steps in some of the steeper parts of the path system in the Dene. The new steps can be found:

- on the path down from Millfield (Seaton Sluice) to the estuary (March)
- at the boardwalk near the waterfall opposite the meadow area (March)
- near the biking area at the tunnel beneath the dismantled railway line (April)
- on a steep slope near the burn downstream of Holywell road bridge (April/May)
- on a steep slope upstream of the burn near Holywell road bridge (September)

The timber and other materials for the last three of these steps were paid for by Northumbrian Water from their 'Bluespaces' environmental improvement budget. NW has also provided gravel, fencing material, plus funding for a chainsaw and training for a second chainsaw operative and offered volunteer help to control Himalayan Balsam. FOHD is deeply grateful for this support.

In September the WP took out the dipping platform at the pond near the Hartley Lane carpark because it was rotten. NCC assure us they will provide timber for a new one when available.

If you would like to support FOHD why not become a member? Only £3 a year for individuals and £5 for families. You receive 2 newsletters a year, an opportunity to have your photographs feature in our calendar and access to FOHD events. Funds go towards bird food and running costs. Membership forms are available at Seaton Sluice Community Centre or online at 'hollywelldene.org.uk'

The Friends of the Church of Our Lady

"CHRISTMAS BRIC-A-BRAC SALE"

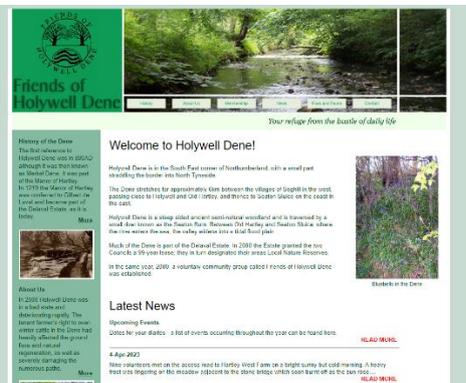
Mon Dec 5th and Tues Dec 6th
(9:30am to 3:30pm)

Seaton Sluice Community Centre
Room 11 – Post Office room

<All Welcome>

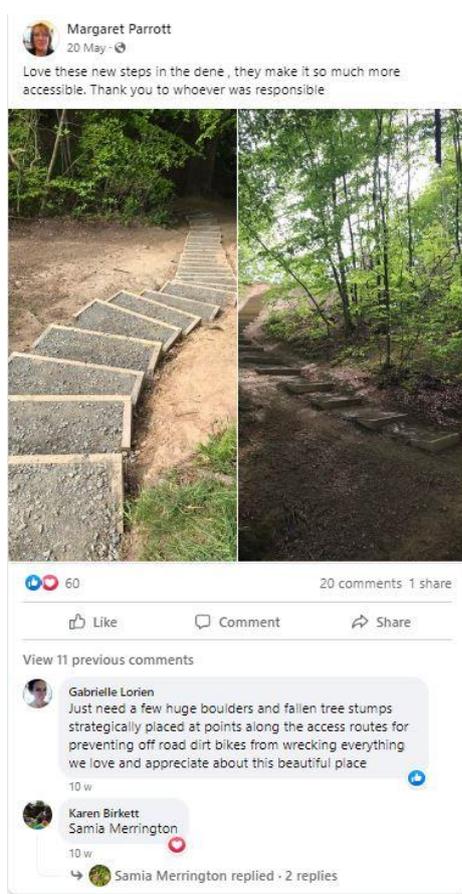
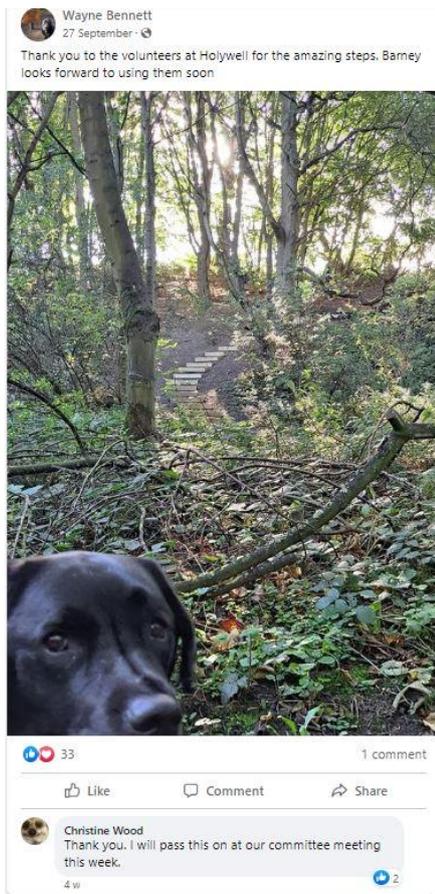
Funds raised will support the re-pointing project at the Parish Church

Articles in the FOHD newsletter and Seaton Sluice and Old Hartley Residents' Association Winter Newsletter (Distributed to all homes in and surrounding Seaton Sluice and linked into the Seaton Valley Online [website](http://www.seatonvalleyonline.co.uk))



All tasks delivered by FOHD can be viewed here as part of this project and beyond can be viewed here: <https://www.holywelldene.org.uk/news.html>

Customer Testimonies & Media



Social media screengrabs from the Friend of Holywell Dene [facebook group](#)

Katherine and Alan Hildrew

“Thank you so much for installing the steps in Holywell Dene. After many years, me and my father are able to enjoy that part of the dene again. He is 78 and was unable to manage the hill until they were put in so that's been great to be able to walk with him on a walk we loved for many years. Thanks to everyone involved. “

Stu Sutton

“Hi Christine, the new steps are great and really open up this area of the dene to people of all ages and fitness levels.”

Lynne Gould

“Great steps, well done “

Diane Brewer

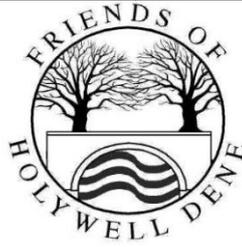
“Well done. All the works you have carried out in the dene is amazing and well appreciated”.

Eva Coulson (Councillor for Holywell Ward)

“You all work so hard and these steps are amazing”.

Katherine Wilkinson

“Stephen Forster that'll make life a little less slippery haha”

Lead Partner Quotes & TestimonialsApril 25th 2023

Dear Stephen,

On behalf of Friends of Holywell Dene I would like to offer our most sincere thanks for the help and support you have given us during the Northumbrian Water's Bluespaces Water Environment Improvement project.

Not only did you facilitate the release of funds for materials identified as part of the project, but you helped a volunteer access training and supplied funds for a new chainsaw and helped to secure the purchase and delivery of 40T of gravel for bridleways, footpaths and access points in the Dene, timber, and support with Himalayan Balsam. We are so grateful for this investment in Holywell Dene.

We have kept members abreast of the project's progress via our website and newsletters and I will be expressing our gratitude at our Annual General Meeting next Tuesday at 19.30 at Seaton Sluice Community Centre. You are very welcome to attend.

Best wishes to you for the future,

Chris Wood (Chairperson) Friends of Holywell Dene

Other Supporting Evidence

Water quality improvements due to identification of misconnections

Reports from dene users have resulted in a misconnections investigation being undertaken by NW

“This catchment was initially investigated in 2016/17 and Northumbrian Water identified and confirmed several properties were misconnected into the Hollywell Dene, and these were corrected by the respective homeowners, as the misconnections were on private pipework.

More recently, the public have made us aware of some issues in this area, and around this time our misconnections team were working in Whitley Bay on something unrelated, but they had also routinely checked this whilst they were there, which is common practice. This has confirmed no improvement on the watercourse despite the corrective work, and so it had been identified for further investigation. Both our networks team and our misconnections team are currently working to investigate further sources of pollution and the Environment Agency have been informed.”

Adam Tindle, Technical Support Advisor, Northumbrian Water

David Lewis
19 February at 17:09 · 🌐

Like Comment Share

View 4 previous comments

John Duffy
Looks like milk
2 w

Cllr. Les Bowman
I had walk past the outlet over the weekend and there was nothing to worry about. So thank you for your post that clearly shows an issue. So on the back of this information in the post I have just now reported this pollution to Northumbria Water and they are sending someone out now to attend to this. The problem arises from unqualified plumbers who when refitting kitchens then they redirect the waste into the surface water system which is usually a drain in the back garden. So every house in the area will have to be checked by Northumbria Water as to see if they are responsible for the pollution. Please phone Northumbria Water if anything like this happens again on 03457171100
2 w

5 8 2